

A DELOYED BROTHER AND FAITHFUL MINISTER IN THE LORD.—*Ephesians*, vi. 21.

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# A DISCOURSE,

IN MEMORY OF

The Rev. JOHN JACOB ROBERTSON, D.D.

DELIVERED IN TRINITY CHURCH, SAUGERTIES, N. Y.,

ON THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,

OCTOBER 8, 1882.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. HORATIO SOUTHGATE, D.D.,

FORMERLY MISSIONARY BISHOP IN THE DOMINION AND DEPENDENCIES  
OF THE SULTAN OF TURKEY.

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## A DISCOURSE.

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BRETHREN BELOVED :

We do well to remember our friend, your Pastor, on the anniversary of his departure from us. It is the old and the modern order of the Church. The ancient martyrs were honored by yearly visits to their burying-places. The Church to-day commemorates her saints on their fixed anniversaries. And the world imitates the Church. The twenty-second of February has become sacred to the memory of Washington. The thirtieth of May, the month of flowers, hangs garlands on the graves of men who died that their country might live. And even private friendship mourns afresh when the day that severed earthly ties returns in its annual round.

It is well to remember, and to honor by our remembrance, those who have been the heroes of the race. We disclaim not the privilege and the right for the men who have fought in their country's cause, or have illustrated, by great achievements, the annals of civil history, the records of science, the pages of literature, or the memorials of that human philanthropy which ministers to the sick, relieves the poor, the widow, the orphan, succors the oppressed, and lifts from the dust the humble toilers of the world.

Nay, we vie with compatriots, and with all men, in these honors to the secular benefactors of mankind. We but ask the same privilege for the heroes of the Faith. In the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, in her blessed Communion of saints, we recognize the closest association which can bind us to our fellow-men. We claim, for the conquests of Christianity, the highest benefits which the ages have conferred on the world. And, for those through whom, as the instruments of the King of kings, these benefactions have been wrought, we claim the right, we acknowledge the duty, of a reverent and grateful remembrance. Let them have their days, as the heroes of earth have *their* days, for a loving, fraternal commemoration. None are more worthy even of the world's homage. They certainly deserve and demand ours; for, they are one with us, and we with them, in the mighty army, the sacramental host, which wars for Christ on earth, or rests in Christ with God.

That our brother, our father, whom we remember to-day, belonged to the goodly company of those who have done rare and distinguished service in the ranks of the Church militant, we distinctly claim. And we claim more than a parochial commemoration as his due. For, his greatest service, and that which will bear his name in honor down to later times, was a service rendered by and for the whole Church of the land, a service of faith and love from the Church in America to her suffering sisters in the East, where our common religion had its birth. It was a new service: it was a strange service. For until then the bond which united us with the great oriental com-

munion had hardly been recognized since the mediæval separation of eastern and western Christendom.

It was a service of Christian charity, as from brother to brother ; a service which sprang from the reawakening of a long dormant Christian affection. And here comes in the joint operation of spiritual and natural forces which has been apparent in almost all great religious movements since Christianity began. Christian love turned again to the East, because the attention of western Christians was drawn thither by the grand events of the Greek Revolution. The Churches of the East had been kept separated from the West, not so much by religious differences as by the barrier which the universal sway of Mohammedanism in the East had created. Oriental Christianity was in a servile condition. It could not act, or speak, without the sanction of its Mussulman master. It could hardly breathe without paying for the privilege. The *kharaaj* was a capitation tax upon Christians for permission to exist. No new church could be built. No old church could be repaired, without a royal firman which cost more than the rebuilding of the church from its foundation. The church itself must be kept out of sight by high walls surrounding. S. Sophia, the Cathedral of Constantinople, had been turned into a Mohammedan mosque. The principal parish churches had met the same fate. Those which remained could not accommodate one-half of the Christian worshippers in the Imperial City. They were obscure in situation. The patriarchal church, the new Cathedral, was mean in appearance, and hidden from view by jealous walls. The



grand old church of the Holy Apostles, which crowned the loftiest summit of the hilled city, and in whose sacred precincts reposed the bodies of saints and martyrs, like Luke the Evangelist, had given place to that pride of the Mussulman, the magnificent mosque of Suleiman, the noblest structure of Mohammedan worship this side of the Bosphorus. The voice of the Church, in its prayers and praises, must not be heard in the streets. The church-going bell must not offend the ears of pious Mussulmans. A rude plank, suspended in the churchyard and beaten by mallets, called the slavish disciples of Christ to their devotions. And, in civil as in spiritual relations, the degradation of the "Nazarene" was complete. No justice for a Christian against a Mohammedan opponent; the oath of a Christian worthless in testimony when set against that of a Mussulman; no retribution for a wrong done a Christian by a follower of Mohammed; Christian daughters forced hopelessly into Turkish harems; Christian boys stolen, in open day, from their parents, without chance of recovery: this, this was the Christianity which the Greek Revolution opened to our view when your Pastor went, on the first embassy of fraternal love, to our co-religionists in the East. He was the first to go; and, to its enduring honor be it said, the American Church was the first to send such a messenger of peace and good will.

Hitherto, any attempt at intercourse between the *rayah* and his western brethren, between Church and Church, would have been visited by the suspicious interdict of the dominant power. Some casual, some occasional visits by European divines had told

the ecclesiastics of Constantinople, that they had a brotherhood in the West other than the Church of Rome, from which the East had parted in bitter enmity. And, the reports of such visitors, on their return, had thrown a dim, not always a true, light on the condition of oriental Christianity. But, of formal intercourse, of intimate and correct knowledge of each other, there was nothing; and there could be nothing while the Caliph sat on the throne of the Cæsars, and Christianity lay as a slave under his feet.

Even so late as 1840, when Dr. Robertson and his young colleague presented themselves to the Greek Patriarch with credentials from their Church at home, the Patriarch hesitated to accept a costly folio copy of our prayer book, on the ground that it might endanger his official safety if it should become known to the Turkish Government that he had received a present from any foreign body. The gift was, therefore, withheld, and is still in my possession, encased in embroidered purple velvet lined with white satin, and bearing on its ample fly-leaf the inscription to the Patriarch which Dr. Robertson wrote. It is a curious and characteristic illustration of his mental temper, that, when I first showed the volume to him on my arrival from America, he at once pointed to a harp embroidered on the velvet and said, "The fair daughter of the Church who did that handsome work would have chosen a different subject, if she had known that the Greek Church does not allow instrumental music in its worship."

But, when the Greek Revolution came, and, after its romantic struggle with the ruthless power of the

Turk, Greece was wrenched from the bondage of centuries, and entered the grand republic of free and independent States, a universal burst of sympathy and joy arose from the West. Our own country joined in the general gratulation; and, amid the civil jubilee of American freemen, sprang up a memory and a love which stirred, with new and strange emotion, the hearts of American Churchmen. The Greeks were Christian brothers, long forgotten, long unknown; but brothers still, by the heritage of a common faith, by the endowment of an apostolic ministry, by the ties of the original sacraments. One who caught the sacred fire was he whom you knew and revered as your Pastor, in his old age. Then a youth, warm with the classic sympathy of his favorite studies, he gave himself, freely and for life, to the service of these suffering brethren, oppressed and degraded, as they had been, by long ages of servitude. He abandoned the inviting prospect which was opening before him as a youthful scholar, whose merits were already beginning to be recognized, and stood forth as a champion, the first of all, ready to serve in any work that the Church might undertake for the aid, the comfort, and the elevation of the Churches of the East. Was not this heroism? Was it not a self-devotion worthy of the best ages and the best spirits of the Church? Shall we let such examples die and be forgotten, in the wild rush of our modern life? Can the American Church afford to forget her own heroes? No; we claim that here rests one who deserves well of his brothers through all the ages yet to come. And, if distant pilgrims do not, year by year, visit his grave, in honor of his memory, and to

revive, over his ashes, their own decaying zeal, there will not be wanting, here and there, one whose solitary steps will seek the sacred spot, and who will ponder, reverently and fondly, over the turf which covers all that was mortal of the "First Missionary of the American Church," the first who bore a message of hope and of love to the down-trodden Church of Greece.

Of course, at such an hour, while every heart was throbbing with sympathy and pity for the Greeks, no mission to their Church could be undertaken which was not itself an expression of fraternal love; and Dr. Robertson went forth, alone, in 1829, instructed to survey the state of the Greek Church, to ascertain its wants, and the ways and means of relieving them. His work was preliminary to the permanent establishment of a mission. He started on New Year's day, and returned at the end of the same year. The result of his exploring tour was the Mission to the Church in Greece, on which he and his family, Dr. and Mrs. Hill, and their printer, embarked in October, 1830. Of the missionaries who stepped upon the deck of the "Cherub" that bright morning ("one of the fairest," says Dr. Potter, afterward Bishop of Pennsylvania, "one of the fairest days which I remember to have witnessed"), the venerable widow of the lately departed Hill of Athens alone survives. Late may she return to her rest!

The letter of Instructions on this occasion was a wonderful advance upon that given to Dr. Robertson two years before. The difference arose from the enlightenment of the former ignorance by the investigations which Dr. Robertson made in Greece. In his

first Instructions, when he entered on his exploration, no note of the catholic character of the mission was heard, excepting a slight acknowledgment of the Greeks, as "having a Church constituted after what we believe to be the apostolic model, and to be acknowledged by us to be a sister Church except in its corruptions of the Gospel." At the same time, a letter of the Presiding Bishop (White, of Pennsylvania) struck a higher note. He desires the missionary to present to the Bishops of the Greek Church "the profound respect and the fraternal affection of a brother bishop in the forty-second year of his episcopacy." He "recognizes the Greek Church as of apostolic origin, and a sister of the Church in which he unworthily holds a conspicuous station. He has for a long time felt a deep interest in the oppression endured by certain portions of the said Church under the Turkish Government, and in their persevering attachment to the faith handed down by our blessed Saviour and His Apostles."

But when, two years later, Drs. Robertson and Hill departed, the style of instructions delivered to them was broader and fuller. They contained an ample acknowledgment of the rights of the Greek Church, and a clear delivery of the principles on which a mission to any branch of the Catholic Church should be conducted. "In your daily familiar conversations," says the American Church, speaking through the Society which represented her, "in all your instructions to the children committed to your care, in any exercise which may be deemed expedient of the ministry which has been committed to you, and, above all, in every work prepared by you

for the press, the Society desires to be understood as being very express and peremptory in the expression of the opinion that you are by no means to say, or write, or do anything which may justly give rise to the impression that you have visited the Greeks for the purpose of introducing another form of Christianity, or establishing another Church, than that in which they have been nurtured. Let it everywhere be known that the Church of which you are presbyters distinctly and fully recognizes the validity of ordination by Greek Bishops; that she lays claim to the same undoubted marks with the Greek Church of a primitive and apostolic origin; that she maintains the same three orders of the ministry, the use of a liturgy in the public worship of Almighty God, and many other things which are deemed to be characteristic of Churches of apostolic and scriptural origin. If in anything the Greek Church may appear to you to have departed from the purity and simplicity of primitive times and scriptural example, beware how you make them matters of sweeping censure or direct attack. Strive rather, steadily and humbly, in the spirit of the meek and lowly Saviour, to restore those among whom you labor to more just notions of the pure, the only correct scriptural standard." And again: "It will be your bounden duty to let it be known that the Church of which you are presbyters is scripturally episcopal, and diligently to avail yourselves of any advantage which Divine Providence may, on this score, be pleased to put into your hands."

Thus spake the Instructions on which the Greek Mission was founded. They were derived from the

teaching which Dr. Robertson had given to the American Church, first, in his letters from Greece, next, in the "interesting and able report" of his tour (as the Executive Committee describe it), and thirdly, perhaps chiefly, by his public preaching in the churches at home, which filled up most of the time between his preliminary visit and his second departure for Greece.

I have detailed them more fully because they are the keynote of his missionary career, the unvarying rule by which he guided his labors. He never swerved from them, to the right or to the left. He maintained them through evil report and through good report. He suffered for them in his dearest interests. They brought upon him the keenest trial of his life. And yet he abode by them to that life's latest hour.

But we anticipate. The Greek Mission still lives. Its history is known and read of all men. Dr. Robertson was clearly its founder, its originator. All that it has been, all that it has done, springs from his conception, from the inspiration of the hour when he suggested the enterprise to the American Church, and offered himself for first enlistment in its service. Is not such work, I ask again, Christian heroism?

The methods, as well as the principles, of action, in aiding the sister Church, were clearly defined in the Instructions. Dr. Robertson had shown not only what was needed, but how it should be done. The great want was education. The mass of degraded Christians must be lifted out of their ignorance, and made intelligent men and women. The instrumentality for this effect must be the two-fold power of

Schools and the Press. The work was essentially different from missions to the heathen. There the first rudiments of Christian doctrine must be taught, and the Gospel preached in its simplest terms. Here, as their Instructions plainly show, the missionaries were not expected to be preachers. They were to be educators. The Greeks were already Christians. They held all the essential doctrines of the Christian faith as firmly and steadily as ourselves. They had proved the strength of their attachment to them by endurance through centuries of persecution. Whatever enlightenment or reform of religious practice they needed would come with the removal of their ignorance. This was your Pastor's theory; and it was adopted by the American Church.

The Mission began in 1830. Its operations were through the press and schools. Almost from the first, the press was assigned to Dr. Robertson, the schools to Dr. Hill. In 1833 it was found expedient to transfer the press to the Island of Syra, in the centre of the Greek Archipelago, while Dr. Hill took charge of the schools in Athens. And, almost from the first, the operations of the press became the subject of unfavorable comments at home. Dr. Robertson took the large view of a man at once a scholar and a Christian, that the elevation of a degraded race, already Christian, required instruction in arithmetic and geography as well as in the Catechism and pious tracts. But, most of those at home who favored foreign missions had but the solitary and rudimental idea of missions to the heathen, "preaching the Gospel;" and even that idea was held in a vague and shadowy way which made the work of the mis-



sionary a species of religious knight-errantry. In 1834, the Doctor had to apologize for printing such works as Colburn's Arithmetic, Jacob's Greek Reader, a modern Greek Grammar, to teach the Greeks of 1830 their own language, Xenophon's Memorabilia, and Plato's Gorgias and Apology. This was not preaching the Gospel: it was simply educating a Christian people in secular learning. True, you cannot elevate an ignorant brother, without informing his intellect as well as improving his heart. True, the Doctor's press sent out, besides, as many or more books for religious instruction. But, in those crude days of missionary effort, "pious individuals in the United States" (as the Doctor calls them) could not see what all these school-books had to do with "evangelizing" a nation; and for what else than *evangelizing* was a foreign mission sent?

Dr. Robertson wrought on, manfully, but anxiously, and under great discouragement. He felt that he had not the firm moral support of the Church at home, especially of that class of Churchmen upon which foreign missions chiefly depended for their sustenance. I saw him, for the first time, in 1836, in his island home. His life seemed to me mainly apologetic; earnest and successful in a great work, yet depressed and hampered by the necessity of making excuses for everything that he did.

The issue of such work is easy to forecast. In great enterprises, doubts and hesitations, when they touch the fundamental principle of the effort, are a worm at the core. They eat out the heart, and bring on a sure, though, it may be, a lingering, death. Dr. Robertson toiled on some three years more, when his

press ceased to enlighten Greece. He had done a good work, the work that was needed where it was done. It was the shedding of the first rays of a new luminary over a benighted land. No, it was the re-appearance of the old sun, after centuries of arctic darkness. The worthiest, because the hardest, toil is that which lays foundations. And that was precisely the work which Dr. Robertson did in Greece. He helped to inaugurate the revival of Greek literature and Greek religion. And whatever honor such work deserves is fairly his.

In 1839 Dr. Robertson was transferred to Constantinople. There, had arisen another Mission, commonly called "the Oriental Mission;" and this too had grown out of an exploration. In principle, it was identical with the Greek Mission; but, in scope and design, it followed a different line of operation. The work in Greece, though prosecuted on terms of amity with the clergy, was addressed directly to the people. The Oriental Mission, as was needful in a country where the supreme government of all the eastern Churches resided, first approached the hierarchy, and then through them, or with their sanction and co-operation, mingled with and worked among the laity. It was in truth an embassy, rather than a mission in the popular acceptance of that term. In ecclesiastical relations, the Mission in Greece was like a consulate in an outlying province; the Mission in Constantinople was a legation to the seat of empire. Both bore, equally, the approval and endorsement of the American Church, which created them. Both carried with them full credentials from the ruling power at home.

It is not my purpose to enter now upon the history of the Oriental Mission. That history is yet to be written. Nor is it my purpose to revive the memory of forgotten controversies, farther than is necessary to do justice to the memory of him who is in all our thoughts to-day. His connection with that Mission was very brief. He came to Constantinople in 1839. I joined him, as his junior colleague, in 1840. He was called home, and finally left the East, in 1842.

During those two years, we were laying the foundations of our work. We established more than friendly, even fraternal, relations with the clergy of the oriental Churches. Everything was bright in prospect. Our reception, from the first, had been cordial and sincere. Our common attitude toward Rome, the joy at finding in the far West a legitimate branch of the Catholic Church, the sense of their pressing needs, drew those oriental brethren to us with an alacrity and earnestness that exceeded our fondest expectations. "We are glad," said the venerable Patriarch of Constantinople at our first presentation, after he had examined the Greek translations of our letters commendatory, "we are glad at last to see among us missionaries who are governed by bishops. We are now on equal terms. We know with whom we have to deal."

The American Church had before it a work of vast power, of unimagined influence. But, ominous changes were brooding at home. The principles of the Mission had been distasteful, from the first, to the large body of those then called "Low Churchmen." They were viewed with suspicion and distrust. The feeling was aggravated by the state of parties in the

Church, at that time. Never, before or since, has party warfare been so virulent, party passions so inflamed, as then. The "Oxford movement" had crossed the ocean, and lighted on this side a fire which burned even more fiercely than in its original home. The Oriental Mission was confounded, in radical and ultra-Protestant minds, with "Tractarianism." It was all unjust, all absurd. But, when did party frenzy ever know how to discriminate? You will smile at the thought of your old Pastor having been regarded as an extremist. But, he was set down, in those days, as a confirmed "Puseyite," for no better or other reason than that he was linked with the Constantinople Mission.

Presently, open assault began. First, there came, from over the water, complaints from missionaries *not* "governed by bishops," that our setting forth our own Church in its distinctive character was placing them at a disadvantage. We should all be known, they argued, they and we, under the common name of Protestants; no distinction of sects on missionary ground. The universal press of the "evangelical denominations" in this country quickly responded, by opening fire upon us; and, a fierce and furious fusilade it was. Many of our own people, especially of those who chiefly sustained our missions to the heathen, sympathized much more closely with Evangelicals outside than with High Churchmen within. Presently, our Church papers (so called) which represented their views and policy, began to show their batteries. They had watched with suspicion from the first; and, in 1841, the whole air was deafened by the roar of the combined artillery

of Low Churchmen, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc.

Unfortunately, (and this was the radical mistake in our missions to the eastern Christians, from first to last), they were placed under the same executive agency with our missions to the heathen. What could be more preposterous than to subject to the absolute control of four presbyters and four laymen the relations of our own to a foreign Church? But this was not all. After the great missionary revolution of 1835, which placed our missions, domestic and foreign, under separate Executive Committees, there was a tacit but practical understanding that the former should be under the charge of "high," the latter of "low," Churchmen: that is to say, our missions at home and abroad were to be governed by a compromise of parties. Thus the Oriental Mission fell into the hands of men who were never in true and living sympathy with it. I speak with respect and kindly feeling of those with whom I waged a vigorous warfare for nine long years; a warfare marked, I believe, throughout by personal regard and fraternal courtesy. They had our missions to the heathen to care for. They were their first, their principal charge. They had to conciliate the friends of those missions, who belonged chiefly to one party in the Church. They were, if not at first hostile to the Oriental Mission, certainly never earnest and cordial in its support. They always had fears. Their ecclesiastical affinities forbade it to be otherwise. And, those affinities, together with the pressure put upon them by those with whom they were most in sympathy in the Church, and on whose favor they

were mainly dependent for the support of the other missions committed to their care, settled, in their minds, the fate of the Mission at Constantinople. They bent before the fierce blast which was raging against it. They loved it less and less. They distrusted it more and more. And, the first issue was, Dr. Robertson recalled home. What followed at Constantinople belongs to another history.

I pause here, with sorrow and with shame, as I stand by the grave of my friend, and ask, Can it be possible that a man who obeys the call of his Church, and gives himself for life to her service in a grand and glorious enterprise, who has trained and educated himself for it by long work and earnest study, who has learned to have no other thought, no other aspiration on earth, who has become less fitted for other labor as he has become more qualified for this—can it be that the Church which he serves will allow him, in middle age, to be torn asunder from his cherished occupation, dismissed from her service, and cast adrift to seek his living as he may, in other and less grateful toil; and all, because he obeyed implicitly the instructions which she had given him, adhered to the principles which she had made the chart of his course, and did her work as she had bidden him to do it? Alas, alas! would that this were a solitary, an unparalleled, example! But, in truth, is not the evil treatment which the Church so often allows to be inflicted on her faithful clergy, the darkest stigma on her past, the greatest danger for her future, life? So, at least, thinks one who has served her in every Order of her ministry, and in almost every variety of service at home and abroad; and, who loves her too well

not to be sensitive to her faults, and anxious for her safety and her success.

Dr. Robertson never recovered from the blow which this violent disruption of his dearest ties gave him. He left his heart in the East, and there it stayed till it ceased to beat. I had thought to have given you, from his private letters to me for the next ten years, some insight into the inner experiences of his disappointed love. But I need not, nor will time allow. He toiled incessantly at home for the work which he could not do abroad. He was probably, in proportion to his means, the largest giver to it in the Church. And how he loved it, let one or two brief extracts from his correspondence tell.

*January 3, 1843:* "Wherever I go, my heart is still in the East."

*June 29, 1844:* "O how rejoiced I should be to be again occupied with you, or at least near you! Perhaps God may yet direct our way across the mighty deep."

*March 6, 1849:* "Had I even positive knowledge (of which I have no fears) that you had imbibed some strange prejudice against me, and that I no longer held any place in your affection or esteem, I should still, while you continue faithful to that cause which I have so much at heart, I should still do all in my power to further your proceedings, and to win for them favor and patronage."

*October 5, 1850:* "I have been so long habituated to turn my thoughts to the far East, that I shall hardly be able to detach them while I breathe the breath of life."

My task is done: no, not my task—my willing tribute of honor and of love. I will not attempt to follow my brother's career as a parish priest. He served, as Rector, forty years, nearly one-half of his entire life, in Binghamton, Western New York, and

in Matteawan and Saugerties, in this diocese. What he was in that office, you know far better than I can tell; and, your estimation of him already stands on record. He had passed threescore when he came to you; and, he was with you more than half the period that he lived after his return to the United States. But, you knew him only in his old age; I knew him, and worked with him, when he was in the full vigor of his prime. Yet, I can hardly believe, that the early spirit of the man was not still in him; that, amid the natural decay of energy and increase of infirmity, he was other than the faithful Rector, the diligent and sympathizing pastor, the instructive teacher, the wise and moderate counsellor, the judicious and careful guide; for, all that his native qualities promised for him, and those qualities must have retained somewhat of their original zest and flavor to the last.

And now he rests from his labors; and to you he has left a twofold trust. His mortal part reposes in your soil. Let no future neglect of the spot where he sleeps, show that time has effaced the love and the remembrance of him from your hearts. He gave to you more years of service than he ever gave to others, more even than he gave to Greece. To you, therefore, more than to any other people, belongs also the sacred guardianship of all else which he has left on earth—his memory, his honor, his good name. I doubt not, you will guard them well. To your faithful care I cheerfully and confidently commend them.

His better part, his immortal soul, is in the hand of God, where no ill can touch it. He sleeps well who



has worked well. Sweet is repose to the soldier after victory, to the laborer after the toil of the day is done. My most comforting thought for my brother is, that he is *at rest*. Of the changes and chances of this mortal life, of its tribulations, of its work, and of its cares, he bore his full share. But, they are past now, and he is in peace forever. There we leave him, safe in the arms of the Eternal Father, who "hath care for His elect."